



# IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE VIKINGS



## A walk along the coastal path from Wirral Country Park, Thurstaston to the Church of St Mary's & St Helen's, Neston

<b>Distance:</b>	5.2 Miles
<b>Time:</b>	Approx 1hr 42min
<b>Start:</b>	Station Road, Thurstaston, Wirral CH61 0HN
<b>End:</b>	The Cross, Neston CH64 9TZ
<b>Car Park:</b>	Station Road, Thurstaston, Wirral CH61 0HN
<b>Bus Stop:</b>	Nearest, Telegraph Road
<b>Railway:</b>	Nearest, West Kirby, 2.8. Mile away, CH48 4DZ

### Directions

- Start:**  
From Wirral Country Park Car Park (charges apply), join the Wirral County Park trail, south. (The old railway line) Follow the footpath.
- Heswall Golf Club:**  
At about half way (2.6 miles), you will pass Heswall Golf Club on your left. Keep walking on the footpath toward Parkgate.
- B5135**  
At Parkgate you can cut down to the Boathouse car park and walk along the front of Parkgate, (Stopping off for an icecream or two), or follow the footpath till you meeting the road (B5135) at the other side of Parkgate.
- Footpath:**  
Cross the road (B5135) and pick up the country trail again. After about 1/2 You will see a gate to the left where you can cut through and enter the church road leading to St Mary's & St Helens.

### History

The Parish of Neston is situated on the banks of the River Dee in Cheshire and is designated an Historic Market Town with a population of 15,000 people. The Royal Charter was granted to Neston in 1728 in support of its status as a market town it and still holds a Friday market and a monthly Farmer's Market. The Parish includes the surrounding villages of Little Neston, Parkgate and parts of Ness and Burton wards.

The Parish Church of St. Mary and St. Helen is situated in the centre of the town. The joint dedication to Mary, mother of Jesus and Helen, mother of Constantine the first Christian Roman Emperor is unique in the Anglican Church and the first record of a stone church building goes back to the 1100s. However, evidence revealed by Viking stone grave markers confirms the existence of Christianity in Neston as far back as 930 AD. The tower was extended in 1540 but the main building was rebuilt in 1874 and reopened in 1875.

At one time, Neston was the biggest port in the North West, serving the Atlantic route before the port of Liverpool was founded. Ships sailed from Neston to Portugal, Spain, France and Ireland, and indeed were part of the lucrative cotton / slave trade elsewhere. For a short period coal mining became an industry around the area, producing high quality coal from narrow seams mainly situated under the Dee estuary. Many of the old traditions are up kept in the town one of which is the only surviving 'Ladies Walking Day' in the country which is strongly linked with the Neston Female Friendly Society. This extends back to times before the Napoleonic Wars.

### See the Stones

If you would like to see the Stones please contact the Church Warden.

- Rare Viking Stones
- A Font used at the baptism of Lady Hamilton
- A Falklands Chapel rescued from HMS Plymouth
- Many and varied Stained Glass Windows
- The Original Charter for the Female Friendly Society

